

FORMATION OF WORDS ON THE EMIC LEVEL

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Abstract

The main function of word-formation is to meet the requirements of a speech community. In linguistics, word formation is creation of a new word. There are different ways of forming new words in linguistics. But the aim of this paper is not to discuss formations on etic level. It aims at showing how words that do not belong to language (to say otherwise those that cannot be found on etic level), are formed in speech. Due to phonological, morphological, morphonological and semantic restraints, formation of some kinds of words is restricted on the etic level though, the emic level is free from such restrictions. Such kind of formations can quite freely be used in fiction. They are used by a writer in certain cases and for certain purposes as occasional formations. It is also possible, such formations to be transferred to the etic level and become the possession of language. But some of them stay as occasional formations.

Keywords: Etic level; Emic level; Metasemiotic level; Prosody

Introduction

The main function of word-formation is to meet the requirements of a speech-community. In linguistics, word formation is creation of a new word. Word formation is sometimes contrasted with semantic change, which is a change in a single word's meaning. The boundary between word formation and semantic change can be difficult to define: a new use of an old word can be seen as a new word derived from an old one and identical to it in form. Word formation can also be contrasted with the formation of idiomatic expressions, although words can be formed from multi-word phrases.

There are different ways of forming new words in linguistics. But the aim of this paper is not to discuss formations on etic level. It aims at showing how words that do not belong to language (to say otherwise those that cannot be found on the etic level), are formed in speech.

Sometimes, due to phonological, morphological, morphonological and semantic restraints, formation of some kinds of words is restricted on the etic level though, the emic level is free from such restrictions. Thus, such kind of formations can quite freely be used in fiction. They are used by a writer in certain cases and for certain purposes. In other words, they often are occasional formations. It is also possible, such formations to be transferred to the etic level and become the possession of language. But some of them stay as occasional formations.

It is also noteworthy that on the emic level, new words are formed not only in belles-lettres style, but also in scientific prose.

When we analyze literary work (fiction), it is often difficult to realize which is an inherently connotative word or word-combination and where a word or a word-combination acquires expressive-emotional-evaluative overtone in the context of fiction.

In scientific prose, where the main function is transferring information and the context is less coloured emotionally, connotative elements are distinctly singled out on general neutral background. Prosodic analysis of scientific texts is also very significant. As the timbre II¹⁴¹ of the scientific text is much less coloured and variative than the timbre II of the text of fiction, all deviations of unmarked timbre II are vivid and can objectively distinguish metasemiotically coloured parts and elements. But while reading a literary text, prosody exceeds syntactic level and horizontal stratification of the text becomes complicated; a singled out word or word-combination is as if “dissolved” in the marked timbre II of the narration.

Newly formed words that are fixed in dictionaries are limited to semantic level. Word-combinations functioning on the metasemiotic level or the cases of figurative meanings are not met here. It should be stated that the majority of new-formations met in scientific texts are linguistic units, i.e. they are fixed in dictionaries as really existing words. Though, we managed to find interesting cases of new formations in speech, i.e. on the emic level.

“The examples adduced above were meant as an illustration of the difference between immediate and **definitionally** based knowledge”.

(D. Crystal)

“This flexibility is ultimately undesirable as any final theory would have to be more explicit in specifying the relationships between the components, but **procedurally** it is invaluable”.

(D. Crystal, D. Davy)

¹⁴¹Timbre II – complicated complex of super-segmental means of phonation functioning on the metasemiotic level, i.e. serving for expressing different expressive-emotional-evaluative tints of meaning.

“It is almost impossible to describe babbling in terms of phoneme-representing segments, but it can be done parametrically”.

(D. Abercrombie)

As we see, these new formations (definitionally, procedurally, parametrically) are not marked prosodically. This probably can be explained by the fact that their function is very close to the function of grammatical forms.

Now let's analyze the material from the literary work and see how new formations function on the emic level.

“ ‘I couldn't marry Felix, couldn't you?’ I asked unguardedly, following in a completely unserious way this train of thought”.

(Lynne Reid Banks “Two is Lonely”)

“In her gray dress, moving her hands indefatigably yet quietly, she seemed like the champion of the rights of sleepers”.

(V. Woolf “Mrs. Dalloway”)

“These two men lived in a world where strangers of intelligence shared a common landscape of knowledge, a community of information, with a known set of rulers and attached meaning. What doctor today knows the classics? What amateur can talk comprehensibly?”

(John Fowles “The French Lieutenant's Woman”)

Though the underlined words (“unguardedly”, “indefatigably”, “comprehensibly”) are not met on the etic level, they are quite easily formed on the emic one and their understanding does not cause any problem.

Prosody of the analyzed words and word-combinations can be described in terms of syntactic prosody: these new formations are not marked prosodically.

It is noteworthy that on the emic level are met such words, the morphological composition of which seems to impede its formation on the etic level (morphological restriction). For instance, in William Golding's novel “The Spire”, we meet the new formation “interiorly” though, its prosody stays within the syntactic scopes.

“He bowed his head as he passed through, and said as he always did interiorly, ‘Lift up your hands!’ ”

(William Golding “The Spire”)

Meanwhile, on the emic level there are quite often formed such cases that should be given special consideration. They essentially are related to special stylistic devices. These new formations cannot be pronounced in a neutral way; they are singled out from the general rhythmic-melodic picture by slow tempo and sometimes combined with other parameters.

In Virginia Woolf's novel “Mrs. Dalloway” we find an interesting example showing the semantics of the initial word.

“**Volubly, troublously**, the late clock sounded, coming in on the wake of Big Ben, slowly with its lap full of trifles”.

(V. Woolf “Mrs. Dalloway”)

The collocation “to sound troublously” is easily converted into the collocation “a troublous sound”; in both cases we deal not only one simple stylistic device, but with a more complicated one – metaphorical epithet.

The following example depicts what kind of creativity new formations can conceal in the context of literary work and how rich polyphony they can create.

“After a time Shark was no longer satisfied with her (daughter’s) purity unless he had been assured of it. Each month he pestered his wife. He knew the dates better than she did. ‘Is she all right?’ he asked

wolfishly.
slowly

(J. Steinback “The Pastures of Heaven”)

It immediately strikes our attention that the new formation “wolfishly” prosodically is singled out not only by slow tempo, but also by using the lower diapason. In the given case, we have to understand all tints of the meaning of not only the adjective “wolfish”, but also of the noun “wolf” from which the adjective is formed with the help of the productive suffix “-ish”. In Longman New Universal Dictionary, the adjective “wolfish” is defined in the following way: “befitting or suggestive of a wolf (e.g. in savage appearance, fierceness or greed)”. In the dictionary entry of the noun “wolf” we find the following definitions among the other ones: “2. a fiercely rapacious person; 4. a man who pursues women in an aggressive way”. Using the connotation “asked wolfishly”, the author managed to render inner psychological state of the father rapaciously protecting his daughter against someone’s violence in a succinct and expressive form.

It is noteworthy that not only new words are formed on the emic level, but also new meanings of the existing words that are not found on the etic level. The word “copy” from Martin Armstrong’s story “The Poets and the Housewife” serves as a good example to show such a case.

“Once upon a time, on a summer’s day, two poets having shut up shop, went out into the country to collect **copy**, for their stock of this commodity was exhausted.”

(Martin Armstrong “The Poets and the Housewife”)

In the given example the noun “copy” acquires such a meaning that cannot be found in any dictionary – “muse”. This meaning, though invented several years ago, still remains “the property” of the emic level and has not been transferred to the etic level so far.

Conclusion

New formations, would it be formation of new words or new meanings, are limitless and are not subject to any restrictions on the emic level. This fact definitely shows the advantage of the emic level over the etic one.

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